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CDI CAREER DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

Professionalism in careers

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This briefing paper sets out the background, evidence and key issues relating to professionalism in careers work in England.[2] *The work is produced on behalf of Careers England and the Career Development Institute (CDI), but the paper does not represent the policy of either organisations.*

Introduction

1. The contemporary education system and labour market present individuals with a series of challenges in terms of choice and navigating complex career pathways. Individuals who struggle to understand and thrive within such a complex and dynamic system may seek or require advice. In response to this international bodies such as the OECD and Cedefop have set out a vision for a lifelong guidance system which acts to increase individuals' understanding of the systems that they inhabit and provide them with support during periods of crisis and transition.[3]

2. In 2010[4] the Careers Profession Task Force was established by the government in recognition of the fact that making the right choices about learning and work matter and that many people need some help and support in making these choices. The Task Force stated that quality careers advice is *essential for social mobility* and should not be left to chance. It also argued that a dedicated and appropriately trained group of professionals are a critical part of providing such career support.

3. The Careers Professional Task Force began its work under a Labour Government, but its recommendations were accepted by the Coalition. However, despite official support for the delivery of a professional service, cuts and policy changes have proved challenging for the profession and for the provision of good quality career support for young people.[5] Recent announcements by the Prime Minister and by the Secretary of State for Education suggest that there is renewed interest in this area.[6]

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[3] Cedefop (2005). *Improving Lifelong Guidance Policies and Systems*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union; Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2004). *Career Guidance and Public Policy: Bridging the Gap*. Paris: OECD.

[4] Careers Profession Task Force. (2010). *Towards a Strong Careers Profession*. London: Department for Education.

[5] Hooley, T., Matheson, J. & Watts, A.G. (2014). Advancing Ambitions: The Role of Career Guidance in Supporting Social Mobility. London: Sutton Trust.

[6] Department for Education and Morgan, N. (2016). Schools must allow access to apprenticeship providers and colleges to create a level playing field in careers guidance. Available from https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-law-will-end-outdated-snobbery-towards-apprenticeships [Accessed 14th February 2016]. Prime Minister's Office and Cameron, D. (2016).

4. The current government is making a serious attempt to provide citizens (and particularly young people) with better career support. At present the policies and announcements that have been made have focused on the role of employers, volunteers, labour market information and the internet in providing this support. Discussion of the *professional basis of careers wo*rk has been notably absent.

5. An opportunity therefore arises to support the continued development of career guidance and careers leadership as professional roles. The existence of professional career experts within schools, colleges and communities is critical to ensuring that the inputs that are made by employers and other stakeholders can be properly orchestrated and the impact of these encounters and experiences maximised.

6. This paper will look at professionalism in careers work and provide a briefing which can support the development of future policy in this area.

A brief history of the professionalisation of careers work

7. Careers work is now well over a century old. As the activity grew in Britain those working in it gradually began to organise and professionalise.[7] The progress of professionalism in the field steadily gathered pace through the twentieth century, weathering frequent institutional reorganisations, changes of government and the privatisation of the Careers Service in the 1990s.

8. The career development profession has also broadened with the growth of the profession in higher education, further education and the development of a distinctive adult guidance tradition. Alongside this there has been a growth of both career development activities in workplaces and as a private service which individuals can purchase for themselves or parents can purchase for their children. Each of these different contexts has a different, albeit often overlapping professional basis reflecting the richness in the diversity of client need and the professional skills required to address this.

9. In 2010 the Careers Profession Task Force was commissioned by government to impose some coherence on this complex landscape and place careers work on a better professional footing. The Task Force's recommendations focussed on the need for cohesion, increased professionalism, progression and continuous professional development across the sector. It also defined level 6 (degree level) as the minimum level of qualification required for full careers professionals with an aim to move to a level 7 (postgraduate) qualification in the future.

Prime minister to announce new generation of mentors to help struggling teens. Available from https://www.gov.uk/government/news/prime-minister-to-announce-new-generation-of-mentors-to-help-struggling-teens [Accessed 14th February 2016].

[7] Peck, D. (2004). *Careers Services: History, Policy and Practice in the United Kingdom*. London: Routledge Falmer.

10. Since 2010 major progress has been made in establishing the institutions and frameworks for the careers profession. However, alongside this the sector has also witnessed dramatic changes following cuts which have seen the labour market contract and pay and conditions weaken. This period has also been marked by a lack of regulation, or even guidance, from government on the issue of what are the minimum qualifications and standards for the delivery of professional careers work.

11. The profession of careers adviser has a well-established initial training route which is currently known as the Qualification in Career Guidance (QCG) and is awarded by the CDI. This is nested within level 7 (postgraduate) qualifications and is seen as the equivalent of the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) which qualifies teachers. However, as a consequence of recent cuts to the sector the number of universities involved in the initial training of careers professionals at postgraduate level has decreased. There is however, a small growth in undergraduate degrees in career development. People can also train via the work-based QCF Level 6 Diploma in Career Guidance and Development. Overall this is helping to change the demographic of the profession and to increasingly make level 6 or above the qualification for practising career professionals.

12. The professional training and career progression for careers teachers and careers leaders in schools is less clearly defined.[8] While various attempts have been made to establish a CPD pathway for teachers who focus on careers work, these have generally had a limited reach into the teacher workforce. The current pilot project by Teach First in this area is promising but small-scale.

13. The Career Development Institute has also introduced a Register of Career Development Professionals. The register serves as a single national point of reference for ensuring and promoting the professional status of career practitioners across the whole sector to other members of the profession, their customers and employers, as well as policy makers, funders and all other stakeholders. Professionals who sign up to be on the register agree to adhere to the CDI Code of Ethics, which includes a commitment to impartiality and CPD and requires a minimum of 25 hours CPD per year. The register therefore serves as a quality assurance tool for the profession.

Career development – professional context

14. Within contemporary British society we accept that there are certain roles which cannot be done by just anyone. Some of these roles are protected by law while others are tightly regulated by professional associations with varying degrees of support from policy. Critically there is also widespread social acceptance of the idea that it is in the public interest that doctors, lawyers,

[8] See Hooley, T., Watts, A.G. & Andrews, D. (2015). *Teachers and Careers*. Derby: The International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby and Andrews, D. (2011). *Careers Education in Schools*. Stafford: Highflyers Publishing.

teachers and a range of other roles should only be open to people who have the required qualifications, education, training, skills and experience.

15. Professions and professionalism are often difficult to define. Usually such definitions rely on a taxonomy of professional attributes which include the possession of knowledge and skills which are based on a common body of theory and enacted through a recognisable set of professional practices.[9] Such definitions also often include the importance of a community of practice of professionals with attendant institutions such as professional associations which are capable of taking on some of the role of regulating and developing the profession. Associated with both the professional attributes and the community of practice, it is important that individuals who are part of a profession identify with a common professional identity. [10] Finally, professions are further defined by the way in which they are seen and understood by the populace and the way in which the state relates to them through policy and regulation.

16. It is clear that careers professionals meet the definitions of professionalism. Notable features of this professionalism include:

    a. a common body of theory and evidence on which the profession draws;[11]

    b. a clearly identified body of knowledge and skills which describe and define professional standards;[12]

    c. the existence of both an academic and work-based initial training routes and an extensive range of CPD opportunities up to doctoral level;

    d. a range of professional institutions including the CDI through which the profession is managed, regulated, developed and quality assured (in terms of ethics, malpractice and the UK Register of Career Development Professionals);

    e. a community of practice which is served by the CDI and a range of other conferences, meetings and online CPD.

17. The existence of impartial and knowledgeable career professionals does not mean that these are the only people from whom an individual can get career support. People regularly have useful conversations about their careers with their friends, families, co-workers, managers, teachers and a wide range of other individuals. Such conversations do not undermine the value

[9] Evetts, J. (2014). The concept of professionalism: Professional work, professional practice and learning. Billett, S., Harteis, C., Gruber, H. (Eds.), *International Handbook of Research in Professional and Practice-based Learning*. Dordrecht: Springer; Saks, M. (2012). Defining a profession: The role of knowledge and expertise. *Professions and Professionalism*, 2(1), 1-10.

[10] Beijaard, D., Verloop, N., & Vermunt, J. (2004). Reconsidering research in teachers' professional identity. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 20 (2), 107–128.

[11] Hooley, T. (2014). *The Evidence Base on Lifelong Guidance*. Jyväskylä, Finland: European Lifelong Guidance Policy Network (ELGPN).

[12] Career Development Institute. (2014.). National Occupational Standards: Career Development. Available from http://www.thecdi.net/National-Occupational-Standards [accessed 14th February 2016].

of a distinctive careers profession any more than having a conversation about your health with a friend means that you no longer need a doctor. In fact, careers professionals may encourage individuals to seek a wide range of opinions. They may also help individuals to sort through the often contradictory advice that they have received from their friends, peers and colleagues.

18. Much has been made of the role of external stakeholders such as employers and other working adults in inspiring and contributing to the career development of young people. Such contributions from employers are useful and complementary to the *specialist skills* that career professionals bring in supporting the individuals to assess their capabilities and personal needs and to connect these with the requirements of the labour market and education systems.

19. In discussing professionalism within the careers field it is therefore important to make some key distinctions between different groups with whom an individual might have a career conversation.

    a. **Career informants**. People can have career conversations with anyone. All of these conversations provide individuals with the opportunity to reflect on their careers and ideas and potentially to gain benefit. When these conversations are with someone with a particular knowledge of a field that the individual is interested (e.g. an employer) in they can be particularly useful. There is a strong evidence base which supports the involvement of employers and individuals from the world of work in the career learning of individuals.[13] However, if access to career informants is going to be provided to a wide range of individuals and to be most effective it requires brokerage, effective preparation and follow up and the provision of broader contextual information (what other opportunities exist) and specific technical information (e.g. the links between qualifications and careers). This means that career informants and career professionals are complementary, working in partnership rather than in competition, and that a key role for career professionals is to co-ordinate the involvement of career informants to ensure the most benefit. [14]

    b. **Congruent professionals**. Another area where the professionalism of careers work can be confusing is with respect to the role of congruent professionals such as teachers, social workers, youth workers and human resource management professionals. Many of these roles inevitably undertake some careers work as part of their broader professionalism. It is important that such professionals' initial and continuing professional training should include an insight into careers work. However, such training will usually stop well short of the level of training given to career professionals. An interesting issue relates to the way in which individuals within congruent professions who take a strong and sustained interest in careers work relate to the careers

[13] Mann, A. (2012). *It's Who You Meet: Why Employer Contacts at School Make a Difference to the Employment Prospects of Young Adults*. London: Education and Employers Taskforce.

[14] Careers Sector Stakeholders Alliance (2014). *The Roles of Employers and Career Professionals in Providing Career Support to Young People in Schools and Colleges* (Briefing Note 13). London: CSSA.

profession. Within schools some teachers develop a specialism in careers education (career teachers) while others lead the school's careers and enterprise programmes (career leaders). The development of both careers teachers and career leaders is a critical part of the delivery of careers work in schools. Many of the teachers who have taken on these roles have engaged with training and achieved qualifications that have given them a *dual professionalism*.[15] This has been acknowledged as a route to professional status in the CDI's career progression pathway.[16] However, to date training and CPD have been optional, and as such there is no standardisation of career teacher and career leader practice in schools.

c. **Para-professionals**. Most professions recognise that there are a range of activities within their area of interest which do not require full professional status. In the context of careers work this might include managing information resources, checking C.V.s, triaging clients, organising speakers and events and so on. The CDI describes these as 'first contact' and 'support' roles and suggests the qualification levels 3 and 4. Such para-professionals would be expected to be working closely with full professionals in most circumstances. In the career development sector there is a progression route which supports people in these roles to progress to become a career development professional should they wish to do so.

d. **Career development professionals**. Such individuals are expected to be autonomous professionals, with specialist knowledge of the labour market and education system as well as a series of pedagogic, counselling and organisational development skills. As already discussed there are a range of routes by which an individual might have achieved such professional status. The career adviser trained to level 6 or above is one, the career teacher who has achieved dual professionalism following initial qualification as a teacher is another. There is also a critical role, especially within schools for a career leader who may come from either a career adviser or career teacher background who can provide strategic and operational leadership for career development programmes. In the context of the discussion about different roles, it is the careers leader who is best placed to link the various other roles together to provide the individual with a career learning environment where they can make best use of career informants, congruent professionals, para-professionals and the specific contribution of professionally qualified career advisers who enable pupils to make sense of the information provided and relate this to their own biographical details and the consideration of relevant post-16 and post-18 routes.

[15] Hooley, T., Watts, A.G., and Andrews, D. (2015). *Teachers and Careers: The Role Of School Teachers in Delivering Career and Employability Learning*. Derby: International Centre for Guidance Studies, University of Derby.

[16] Career Development Institute (2015). Career Progression Pathway. Available from http://www.thecdi.net/Career-Development [Accessed 14th February 2016].

20. The range of activities that careers professionals are engaged in has broadened over recent years and is now codified in the National Occupational Standards: Career Development (NOS: CD). Recent work at a European level has helped to clarify these roles and to communicate them in an accessible way. The Network for Innovation in Career Guidance and Counselling in Europe (NICE)[17] has set out a typology of the activities that comprise the skill base of the careers professional. This is conceptualised as five distinct roles which a professional may combine or specialise in. These are as follows.

    a. **Career information and assessment expert.** Helping individuals to assess their own strengths and connect them meaningfully to the labour market and the education system.

    b. **Career educator**. Using pedagogic approaches to develop individuals' career management skills.

    c. **Career counsellor**. Using counselling and advice work approaches to help individuals to understand their situation and to progress in the labour market and education system.

    d. **Programme and service manager**. Works with individuals and organsations to design and deliver career development programmes.

    e. **Social systems intervenor and developer**. Uses networking, consultancy and advocacy skills to develop organisations and systems and help individuals to succeed within them.

The further development of the profession

21. The continued professionalisation of the careers development sector remains an ongoing project. Publications from the CDI such as *Career Guidance in Schools and Colleges: A Guide to Best Practice and Commissioning Career Guidance Services*[18] and the *Framework for Careers, Employability and Enterprise Education 7 – 19*[19] have helped to support the work being undertaken in schools and colleges. In 2016 the CDI will publish a blueprint of learning outcomes for professional roles in the career development sector which will be used to inform the future development of Level 6 and Level 7 qualifications for all professional roles. If the profession is to continue to develop it will need to successfully address the following issues.

    a. Engage policymakers and persuade them that career development professionals are critical for the achievement of a range of policy goals.

[17] Schiersmann, C, Ertelt, B-J, Katsarov, J., Mulvey, R., Reid, H. and Weber, P. (2012). *NICE Handbook for the Academic Training of Career Guidance and Counselling Professionals*. Heidelberg: Heidelberg University.

[18] CDI (2014). *Career Guidance in Schools and Colleges: A Guide to Best Practice and Commissioning Career Guidance Services*. Stourbridge: CDI.

[19] CDI (2015). *Framework for Careers, Employability and Enterprise Education 7 – 19*. Stourbridge: CDI.

b. Grow public understanding of the nature of the profession. This could include providing the public with more information about what professional careers support would offer them and what to look for when they are trying to access it.

c. Ensure that the initial training routes for both career advisers and careers teachers/career leaders in schools are strengthened and that they have the necessary capacity to meet the need for the profession.

d. Continue to develop the profession in line with the new challenges thrown up by the contemporary world. These challenges are likely to include rapid change within the labour market, technological developments and a range of demographic changes. In response to these changes the profession is likely to need to increase its focus on new technologies, group work, consultancy skills and the use of labour market information within initial and continuing training and professional education. The NICE framework offers a strong conceptualisation of what such a twenty-first century careers professional should have mastery over. While this conception aligns well with the NOS: CD there is a need to further embed this kind of expansive conception of the career development professional role across the sector.

e. Carefully monitor the demographics of the profession to ensure its longevity. The sector's training capacity has declined in recent years and it is likely to be important to look at ways to encourage more people to train as career development professionals over the medium term if the profession is not to face skills shortages.

Conclusions

22. The CDI has, over a short period of time done a great deal to enhance the professionalism of the sector[20]. As such there is much greater regulation of practice through standardisation of qualifications, the ethical framework and the UK Register for Career Development Professionals. Collectively these have established a firm foundation on which the profession is able to expand and grow.

23. Career development is a valuable and viable profession. If it is to have an impactful future, the profession needs to persuade government that a professional component is critical to the successful implementation of its education and employment policies.

[20] Johnson, C. and Neary S. (2015). Enhancing professionalism- progressing the career development sector. Journal of the *National Institute for Education and Counselling*. 35: 57- 62.